

IDEOLOGY AS A DOMINANT PARATEXTUAL ELEMENT IN TRANSLATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyse and point out the influence of ideologies, understood here as *Weltanschauungen*, in the practices of all social groups. Therefore, ideologies are present in text writing, namely in translation and paratranslation. This is the main reason why we believe ideologies may be considered as paratextual elements, since they perform various functions which guide the text's reader and establish the text's intentions, i.e., how it should be read. As a matter of fact, ideology is present in every written, verbal or iconic text at a paratextual level. The ideologhemes underlying the text are responsible for the cohesion and coherence of the social and cultural discourse and help us understand the ideology of the discourse itself, the ideology of the translator, which is in the basis, unintentionally, or not, of his/her translative choices.

Key words: ideology, *Weltanschauung*, paratext, epitext, peritext, decoding, translation, paratranslation

Resumo

O objetivo deste trabalho é analisar e apontar a influência das ideologias, entendidas aqui como *Weltanschauungen*, nas práticas de todos os grupos sociais. Deste modo, as ideologias estão presentes no texto escrito, designadamente na tradução e na paratradução. Esta é a principal razão por que acreditamos que as ideologias podem ser consideradas elementos paratextuais, uma vez que são várias as suas funções quer direcionando a leitura, quer determinando as intenções do texto, i.e., como deve o texto ser lido e entendido. É, em nossa opinião, inegável que a ideologia está presente em todos os tipos de texto a nível paratextual, quer sejam os textos escritos, verbais ou icónicos. Os ideogramas subjacentes ao texto são responsáveis pela coesão e coerência social e cultural do discurso e ajudam a compreender a ideologia do próprio discurso, bem com a ideologia do tradutor, a qual está na base, intencionalmente, ou não, das suas escolhas tradutivas.

Palavras-chave: ideologia, *Weltanschauung*, paratexto, epitexto, peritexto, descodificação, tradução, paratradução

Introduction

God is the silence of the Universe and the human being
is the cry that gives meaning to that silence.
José Saramago

As Xoán Garrido points out in his essay “The Paratranslation of the works of Primo Levi”, “paratranslation is a concept, which aims to become the centre of knowledge of the Being, that is, of languages and cultures in our modernity” (65). Therefore, according to Garrido, “translation is something more than a purely linguistic exercise” (*cf.* 65). In fact, it must be aware of “all extratextual conditioning factors,

which in many cases are the centre of the translational process and not merely its context” (cf. 65).

These extratextual factors are what Genette explains as being the elements which lie on the threshold of the text and which consist of a peritext, i.e., elements such as titles, chapter titles, prefaces and notes, and of an epitext, defined as elements such as interviews, publicity announcements, reviews by critics, private letters and other authorial and editorial discussions.

Apart from these factors, there is still an element which, according to us, should be considered as paratextual, namely ideology, understood as the sense of the otherness of language, since “the organizing centre of any utterance, of any experience, is not within but outside - in the social milieu” (Bakhtin/Volonišov 93), and “the hero interests (...) as a particular point of view on the world and on oneself, as the position enabling a person to interpret and evaluate his own self and his surrounding reality” (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* 47).

Therefore, we agree with Bakhtin, when he states that “the structure of utterance and of the very experience being expressed [in any text] is a social structure” and that “linguistic creativity cannot be understood apart from the ideological meanings and values that fill it” (cf. 98). As a matter of fact, language is always reflecting and transforming class, institutional and group interests. Every *Weltanschauung*, every point of view and opinion is a verbal expression and it is addressed not only to its object, but also to others’ speech about it:

Each and every word expresses the “one” in relation to the “other.” I give myself verbal shape from another’s point of view, ultimately, from the point of view of the community to which I belong. A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another.

(Bakhtin/ Vološinov 86)

The Bakhtinian dialogism is, thus, the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by polyphony, that plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, involving the character’s ideological and social positioning, as well as

by *heteroglossia*, that “multiplicity of social voices and the wide variety of their links and interrelationships” (*Problems of Dostoyevsky’s Poetics* 263), i.e., everything means as a part of a greater whole.

Dialogue and its various processes are the main forms of interaction between all social agents. This concept of dialogue is of the utmost importance, if we want to analyse all paratextual elements of a text, before translating it. Translation implies “a profound understanding of each language’s socio-ideological meaning and an exact knowledge of the social distribution and ordering of all the other ideological voices of the era” (*The Dialogic Imagination* 417), because *slovo*, a word often used by Bakhtin to speak about word and discourse, is an ideological sign par excellence: “Everything ideological possesses meaning: it represents, depicts, or stands for something lying outside itself. In other words, it is a sign. Without signs, there is no ideology” (Bakhtin / Vološinov 9).

1. Translation and Ideology

From what has been said above, one may probably assert that ideology and subject are mutually defining, since, as Bakhtin affirms, “the reality of ideological phenomena is the objective reality of social signs” (*cf.* 13).

The total conception of ideology is, in fact, a *Weltanschauung*, an all-encompassing view of the world. Ideologies order the social world and legitimate, or not, its practices. Therefore, to identify an ideology, we must deconstruct its structures, contexts, and motives.

Ideologies incorporate the elements, on the basis of which social groups operate, such as shared rituals, prejudices, stories and histories. We might, therefore, refer to ideology as a thought-practice, since the evidence for our thinking lies in our actions and utterances.

The process of translating implies putting face to face different ideologies, which should be decoded, in order to be delivered in the target language. Ideology is, therefore, present in every text at a paratextual level.

The spatial categories of the paratext – the peritext and the epitext – as well as its temporal situation are pregnant of different *Weltanschauungen*, which the translator has to decode, namely the reverberations of the author's ideology, the different ideologies of the characters, if there are any, the socio-political context of the time in which the text was written, the ideologemes underlying the text, i.e., the manner in which texts reflect and contain elements of society's ideological structures and struggles, the ideology of the publisher's peritext, the ideology of the epitextual productions and, last but not least, the ideology of the translator, which is never totally absent, since, unintentionally, or not, the translative choices may denote the values and the ideas, which structure his/her *Weltanschauung*.

As Bakhtin well focuses in his book *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*, in most literary books one is “dealing not with a single author-artist (...) but with a number of philosophical statements by several author-thinkers” (5), the characters.

As the most universal sign system, language is common to all ideologies and plays a crucial role in the operations of hegemony. Thus, language should not be considered, in our opinion, as a phenomenon of the individualistic internal consciousness. *Slovo*, which means Word and Discourse, should be understood as a concrete social fact, external to consciousness. It is through *Slovo* that the individual constitutes himself in relation to the Other and to society.

In order to identify, as clear as possible, the intention of the author, as well as his message, in any type of text, we must develop a Dialogue with the author, with the text and with the characters. This is probably the only way to reduce the cultural and ideological distance between the “text-world” (*cf.* Nord 146-7) and the receiver of the target text.

2. The author as an ideologue

As an ideologue, the author actualizes his point of view, both in the identity of the narrator, in his speech and language, as well as in the object of his narrative. Underneath the discourse of the narrator, we always find another discourse, that of the author, whose voice intermingles with that of the narrator, taking a refracted form. Through the narrator and through the style used in the narrative, we can hear the ‘voice’ of the author, because of the dialogism of the text itself. Quite often, the author of the text speaks of himself, in the language of the Other, and writes about the Other in his own language.

The author, as every social actor, must be considered as an ideologue, especially if we consider that writing should perhaps be analysed in terms of *postuplenie*, that is, in terms of a continuous performing of individually answerable acts (cf. Bakhtin, *Towards a Philosophy of the Act* 2-4), which implies a two-sided responsibility - both for its content and for its being.

The language used by the author represents a certain *Weltanschauung*, acquiring, thereby, social significance, i.e., the discourse of the author/narrator must be interpreted in the context of complex and varied processes that characterize social interaction. From a social perspective, no word or utterance is ever neutral. All utterances are in fact ideological and comprise an evaluative position. Each field of creativity refracts reality in its own way; therefore, every ideological sign is a segment of reality. Understanding is “a response to a sign with signs” (Bakhtin / Vološinov 11) and this chain of ideological creativity is a *continuum*, based upon the dialectics of dialogue, of polyphony, of co-creation.

In order to better understand Bakhtin’s theory, it is important to bear in mind that, in his opinion, a Dialogue is only possible between free, non-alienated Subjects, which accept each other as such. Furthermore, Dialogue, considered as a free relation between Subjects can only take place in a social non-alienated space and time, i.e., in a world, which is not under the power of money, capital and bureaucracy. Otherwise,

instead of being before an act of communication and co-creation of the Subjects we will be before a business transaction or political machination.

Dialogue has value not as a way of cooperation in a material process of production, but as a way of penetration in the Other, and through him in oneself. It is a way of getting rid of the social mask, which impedes to see the real Subject.

The dialogic relation between author and translator should be, therefore, a relation between two completely free Subjects. From their interaction as Subjects results a new (third) Dialogue, in this case the translation.

3. Characters as social actors

We are the memory that we have and the responsibility that we assume;
without memory, we do not exist, and without responsibility
who knows we do not deserve to exist.
José Saramago

In all works, characters play a central role, not only in the development of the story or history, but also as representations of the different cultural and social parameters of a given society.

Ideologies map the political and social worlds for us. We simply cannot do without them because we cannot act without making sense of the worlds we inhabit. Vadim Kozhinov, a famous Russian scholar, who devoted himself to the cause of preserving Dialogue by publicizing Bakhtin's theory out of Russia, in one of his many books states that, in a book, "facts should not be presented as mere examples, but as a way of thinking" (46), i.e., through our diverse ideologies, we provide competing interpretations of what facts might mean and thus we produce, disseminate, and consume ideologies all our lives long, whether we are aware of it or not. Through Dialogue we may come closer to the essential and deepest relation of life and Being, released from all mutated, altered forms, created by a world of alienation.

3.1. The socio-political context

The text external factors are, normally, implicitly present in the text, as a counterpoint to the revisited, narrated time.

Such factors may be relevant, as far as the ideology of the author and of the characters is concerned, and may even determine the author's own style.

The tensions between spirit and power, between intelligence and politics, lead some authors to question the *status quo*, using writing as an exorcism.

By his/her translative choices, the translator plays an important role in the dialogic process of delivering to the receiver of the target text the social tensions underlying a text, even if apparently aseptic.

3.2. The ideology of the translator

In our war-ridden contemporary societies, we must continually remind ourselves that all conflict starts and ends with constructing an enemy, 'an other who is so foreign and distant that who becomes it.'

Mona Baker

The ideology of the translator is never completely absented in the target text. In his/her Dialogue with the author, the text and the characters, and by certain translative choices, the translator, unintentionally, or not, sometimes lets the values of the society in which he lives, the system of ideas that structure his/her experience of the world influence the process of translation.

A good translator, to be able to dialogise with the text must be a Subject, a free individual, because Dialogue must be open and established as a relation between peers, so that the translator could never fall into the temptation of judging the *Other*.

Hence, we agree with Boaventura de Sousa Santos, when he says that translation is a procedure that allows the creation of reciprocal intelligibility between different experiences of the world (*cf.* 114). When performed with a Benjaminian sense of

mission, of responsible task (cf. *The Task of the Translator: An introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's Tableaux Parisiens*), translation allows the intercommunication between different worlds, between different social realities. This partly explains why Translation Studies and Cultural Studies were never so close as nowadays.

In fact, a translation, capable of originating a new Dialogue, helps to build the *Other*, mediating in the dialogic process between the receiver/reader and the target text, only possible, in our opinion, if there has been an identical Dialogue between the translator and the text of departure.

Thus, translation plays a fundamental role as an instrument for a rethinking of social life. Even literary works of secondary importance may, when translated with rigor, help us reconstruct past and present human realities, contributing, to some extent, to the co-creation of new social relations through Dialogue.

While trying to convey to the receiver of the target text the socio-cultural intertextual marks, the translator is enabling the emergence of a past that may, eventually, contribute to the questioning of our present societies.

Bakhtin, as we have already said, stressed the multi-layered nature of language. Not only are there social dialects, jargons, turns of phrase characteristic of various professions and industries, but also socio-ideological contradictions carried forward from various periods and levels in the past. Language is not a neutral medium that can be simply appropriated by a speaker, but something that comes to us populated with the intentions of others. Every word tastes of the contexts in which it has lived its socially-charged life.

3.3. The ideologemes of the text

The ideologemes of the text, i.e., the principles responsible for the cohesion and coherence of the social and cultural discourse, highlight the ideology underlying the discourse. They are small units, terms and expressions, which contain elements of society's ideological structures and struggles. For instance, certain cultural and social

constraints may influence the construction of a work. Furthermore, the same ideologeme may have different interpretations and effects, depending on the ideological system that maps the text. Any work is, therefore, intrinsically linked to culture and the Dialogue with each text as well as to the texts that intersect it endlessly. Through the interpretation, considered as a free Dialogue between Subjects, human freedom is recovered. If, in terms of existence, human freedom is relative, in terms of sense, human freedom is absolute, since sense is the result of a dialogic process, which is beginning all over again and which is essential in translation.

3.4. The publisher's ideology

A very important point that should be carefully analysed is the role of opinion-makers in the decisions made by the editors. More and more often the decisions are made upon by what we could perhaps call international ratings on the massive interest in a certain culture or country. Though many people speak about the need of a free Dialogue with the *Other*, although the fact is that we translate less and we read less, at least in Portugal. Translation, as a mediation *medium* of concepts and ideas, is unfortunately subjected to the manipulative selections of texts made by multinational publishers.

Globalisation, as we live it today, is centred in a single pole, when the ideal situation, in our opinion, would be to achieve a plurality of poles that would make it impossible for any nation, state, group or race to feel superior to every otherness as to impose their values as the only that are real and valid for all humanity.

Globalisation, as we can see today, is above all a geopolitical concept and, therefore, with a strong economic component that determines the future of people, their choices around education, culture and other societal aspects.

To what extent globalisation is not a legal return to slavery of man by man, an imposition of nomadism as the only way to exist, is unfortunately something we cannot yet predict. Instead of the sacrifice of Abel by Cain, it is possible we will assist, this

time, to the killing of Cain by Abel. Why are we heading ahead towards a stagnating standardisation, towards a bureaucratization of every act, towards an education based upon pre-manufactured models: these are some of the questions standing today on our way. There are many issues underlying all our choices and, what is more, globalisation tends to concentrate the decision power at the intangible level of internationalized capital.

When we are offered only certain theatre plays, certain books and certain films, our choice is limited from the very beginning. The subject is totally confined to a tiny freedom of choice. Decisions are taken by an invisible *Other* – the capital. Globalisation is subjugating everything, including human values, to the laws of supply and demand.

Time has come for us to analyse the hazardous effects of modernism and post-modernism as far as its individualistic obsession is concerned, not to speak of its successful attempt of replacing the individual by an image. We seem to exist and we believe so much in our image that we empty our being of what we really are, becoming totally dependent on the opinion of the *Other* and transforming ourselves in a perfectly independent image. The Subject becomes in fact an object.

Market exchange is obviously necessary to any civilized society. But our postmodern society is historically unique in elevating the mercantile principle to a position of complete dominance over the economy. At this degree of power, the market ceases to fulfil its function and becomes an end in itself. The market becomes an ideology. Fukuyama, in his book *The End of History*, advocated that the market ideology had put an end to any alternative, constituting therefore the end of all ideological evolution.

The rule of money as David Hawkes points out “is part of a more general phenomenon, which we might term the dictatorship of representation” (3). Spheres of life that we used to consider independent from the influence of the menacing rules of ‘economy’, like for instance, political culture, are now under its control. Corporations sponsor everything from art galleries to special book editions.

According to Bakhtin, “every utterance participates in the ‘unitary language’ [in its centripetal forces and tendencies] and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia [the centrifugal, stratifying forces]” (*The Dialogic Imagination* 272). The crucial point is that in their struggle the relations between such forces will differ in their forms and effects at different times. At one time, and under specific historical conditions, centripetal forces will organise a certain form of discourse as the centralised, unified, authoritative form, and thus *monoglossia* and *monologism* will be effected. This, in our opinion, is what is happening today in our globalized world, where we are almost told what to think, what to buy, what to translate and what to read. We believe it is important to underline here that, for Bakhtin, a unitary language is not something given (*dan*) but is always in essence posited (*zadan*). Both the formal unity which it has, and the cultural unity whose purpose it serves, are the effects of centralising forces overcoming *heteroglot* differences. We believe once again that Bakhtin was never so right as nowadays, when we think of the hegemonic role of English language in the world of communication.

Conclusion

The act of reading the paratextual margins of the text is a paratranslational act. The interdependency between paratext and text is undeniable. The role of the paratext is to present, physically and ideologically, the text.

It is at the paratranslational level of the text that the role, eminently ideological and economic of the editor, is evident. It happens often that, as stated by Xoán Garrido, in his PhD dissertation, the ideology present in the text itself is different from that present in the paratext. (cf. 328). And, in the case of the epitext, the intervention of the translator is almost none. These aspects are usually undertaken by other mediators, in particular editors and critics.

As referred by Yuste Frías, the cover of a book operates, normally, as a verb-iconic unit, with an ideological content:

as unidades non verbais condicionan e complementan o sentido-conforme a unha determinada ideoloxía da recepción- das verbais, a lectura das unidades verbo-icónicas resulta fundamental para a fase de reescritura en todo proceso de traducción. (...) Toda manipulación dunha variable calquera dunha unidade verbo-icónica que se traduza provocará repercusións na propia textualidade e, consecuentemente, modificará a lectura que do texto meta fará o destinatario final.

(*apud* Garrido: 332)

When a publisher chooses a title or a cover, he is clearly following a communicative strategy pregnant with ideology. As Castoriadis refers, the networks of complicity are powerful (*cf.* 99) and there is often evidence of the silencing of dissenting voices, not by means of censure, but by marketing policies in general. Castoriadis goes further and states that most critics behave like traitors as far as their critical work is concerned, and that many authors as well commit true acts of treason as to their responsibility and rigor, not to speak about the wide complicity of the public, that is far from being blameless in this matter. (*cf.* 99-100).

Society, power and ideology are the variables that most affect the act of translation. Their influence is, in fact, overwhelming, partly, because in our postmodern society the existing class struggle has become internalized, and the conflict is, nowadays, an ideological struggle. Paratranslational dialogism would be, in our opinion, an effective method to analyse these variables.

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